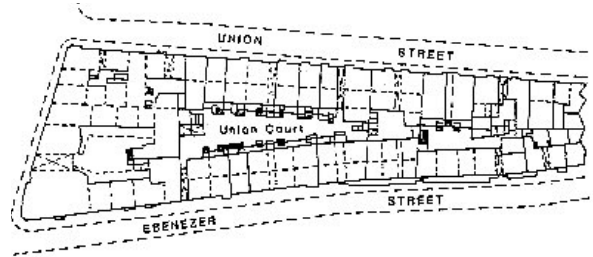


William Barnett, classy musician and church organist for 50 years

William Henry Barnett, born in the centre of Leeds on 7 March 1808, had humble beginnings as the son of a cotton dresser, Matthew Barnett. (Cotton dressers assembled the yarns or threads prior to weaving of cloth.) The family lived in Ebenezer Street which was one of the notorious back to back houses around Union Court. Historians describe residents ‘*shared a stand pipe for water in the middle of the court, had no sanitation, a mudbath for a floor, and in the worst case on record, more than 700 people in the 34 houses. This would have been a noisy, smelly and unpleasant place to live – some people even kept pigs in their houses. The back-to-back courts provided perfect conditions for the spread of disease.*’^[A] Even though conditions were cramped, residents were not necessarily poor – there was competition for housing as population of Leeds expanded more quickly than accommodation could be built. At the time of the 1841 census Ebenezer Street housed a variety of tradesmen; mechanics, shoemakers, tailors, joiners as well as cotton dressers. Leeds’ Victoria Gate shopping centre was built on the site of Ebenezer Street in 2016.



William’s father, Matthew, died during the Napoleonic wars, not from military action but from drinking poisoned water from a well. Despite this, William served an apprenticeship and became a pupil of Edward Booth, a celebrated violin maker who lived in West Leeds. From there William joined the orchestra of the Royal Italian Opera Company, specialising in flute and cello. He was a ‘Professor of Music’ at the age of 23, touring Europe and New York with **Madame Marie Malibran** ^[ph3], a Spanish operatic singer who was known for her stormy personality and dramatic intensity. Tragically, she died in 1836 aged just 28, as a result of injuries falling from a horse.



William had married **Rebecca Reynolds** in 1831 but she died at the birth of son **George Frederick** in 1839. Perhaps the deaths of Madame Malibran and Rebecca prompted William to consider a more settled way of life? He became the organist of St Mark’s church in Woodhouse, Leeds, attended by **George Matthewman**, a respected merchant.

Holy Ascension Church was built in 1838 as part of the Victorian Restoration which aimed to turn around declining attendance in the Church of England. Non-conformist churches were increasingly popular as they provided worship free of charge, with no pew-rents. Hundreds of churches were built across the country including those in Settle, Stainforth, Rathmell and Langcliffe. Many had ornate decorated architecture and more traditional ‘high church’ services. Attendance at St Alkelda’s at Giggleswick took quite a hit as a result. The gravestone of James Metcalfe who died in 1844 has an Latin inscription which reflects this new direction, taken from a Gregorian motet first written in 1639, (just before the Cromwellian Commonwealth): ‘*Deus, propitius esto mini peccatori*’ – God forgive me.

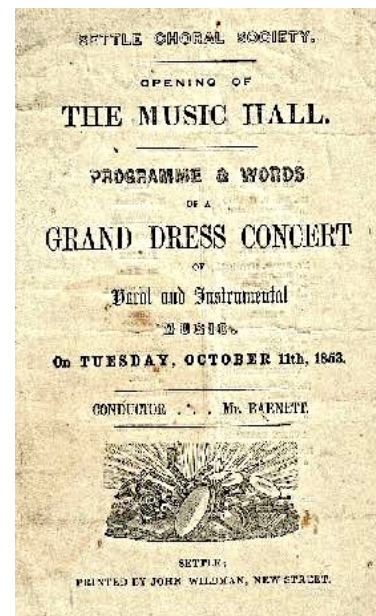
Classical music played a much greater part in 19th century society than today and so Holy Ascension Church needed an excellent organist to fulfil its aims. Incredibly, thanks to a recommendation from merchant George Matthewman who was a friend of *Thomas Hardacre*, a churchwarden at Holy Ascension, they managed to recruit William Henry Barnett. An organist of such high standing would have been valued and well paid. Together with George Howson, the

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son of Reverend John Howson at Giggleswick and *Reverend John Robinson*, William established the new Settle Choral Society. With William as its leader and conductor the Choral Society earned a good reputation across Yorkshire, and beyond.

Just before William's appointment in Settle in 1840, William married **Margaret Dunn**, a schoolmaster's daughter, who came from Wicklow in Ireland. She gave William four children within five years, but unfortunately two of them died in infancy. The family lived on the Market Place close to what is now Boots' Chemist and in each census return William described himself as a '*professional organist, musician, music teacher.*'

Reverend John Robinson decided that the Choral Society need a new, larger venue to perform and paid for a new 'Music Hall' on Kirkgate on the site of the old National School. (He also paid for the replacement 'new' school in Upper Settle.) On 11th October 1853 William led a Grand Dress Concert of vocal and instrumental music to mark the opening [ph1,2] with suitable pomp and celebration [1]. This was to be the first of very many similar concerts. During the 1880s the building was renamed 'Victoria Hall' as we know it today.



OPENING OF THE MUSIC HALL, SETTLE.

In the early part of last week, this interesting building, which promises to contribute so much to the instruction and entertainment of the inhabitants of Settle and its neighbourhood, was formally opened and dedicated to public use. The occasion was celebrated by the performance, on Monday evening, of the sacred oratorio of "The Creation," by the members of the Settle Choral Society, assisted by the principal members, vocal and instrumental, of the Leeds Choral Society, and by several distinguished vocalists whose services had been specially engaged for the occasion; and on Tuesday evening by a concert of miscellaneous music. Before, however, we speak of these performances, it may be well to say a word in regard to the building which has been thus auspiciously inaugurated. A want has long been felt of some appropriate building in which the various requirements of a locality, possessing a population such as that of Settle and its neighbourhood for all purposes of public assemblage—such as lectures, concerts, and public meetings—could be conveniently and sufficiently provided for; and the successful establishment of a Choral Society in the town within the last few years has tended to cause this want to be still more seriously felt. In the absence of any public attempt to supply this deficiency, necessarily involving a considerable expenditure with no prospect of adequate return, this

Music Hall has been erected at the sole cost of the Rev. J. Robinson, who has, in a spirit of praiseworthy liberality, provided not only that the building should be such as to answer all the purposes of public instruction and entertainment, but also be a handsome architectural ornament to his native town. The structure is designed in the Italian style, and contains a handsome music room, 50 feet long and 30 feet wide and of good height; fitted up with a spacious orchestra, rising floor, and convenient waiting and refreshment rooms; and capable of affording accommodation to an audience of about 400 persons. The architectural ornaments are simple and appropriate, and the hall possesses exactly that degree of resonance, the absence or excess of which is alike embarrassing to the singer or lecturer; and the precise amount of which in our public buildings it appears to be so difficult to attain. The work appears to be executed in a solid and substantial manner, and the arrangement of the attendant apartments seems to be very convenient. The building was designed and completed under the superintendence of Mr. E. G. Paley, of Lancaster. The same spirit which dictated its construction presided over its inauguration, and no expense seems to have been spared to render its opening worthy of the occasion.

In the 1860s William and *George Stansfeld* visited the Conservatoire in Leipzig, which had been founded by the composer Felix Mendelssohn [CH]. This was a productive partnership [SC].

Mr. Barnett and Mr. George Stansfeld (just returned from the Conservatoire of Music, Leipsic) organised an Orchestra and gave the Settle folk their first taste of theatrical venture on a grand scale, which provided a handsome sum for the benefit of the Lancashire sufferers during the great cotton famine.

Their Settle Choral Society concerts in the 1850s and 1860s were highly regarded. Using William's contacts they featured soloists from around the country, one featuring the star of the London concert scene, soprano Miss Berry Greening. Her singing complemented a range of difficult classical pieces which '*were played with great precision, and a crispness, unusual in amateur orchestras, which must have*

settleresearch@gmail.com

IN THE EVENING
A Miscellaneous
CONCERT
Will be given in the MUSIC HALL, by the Members of the Choral Society assisted by several Friends.
Comic Vocalist, **MR. MOREY.**
FULL BAND AND CHORUS.
Leader, **MR. BARNETT.**
Conductor, **MR. G. STANSFELD.**
Admission:—Reserved Seats, Area, 2s 6d.: Unreserved, Area, 1s. 6d., Front Gallery, 1s.: Back Gallery, 6d.
Doors open at 7 o'clock, to commence at 7.30.
Tickets may be had at Wildman and Son's, where a plan of the Hall may be seen.
JOHN ROBINSON, Hon. Secretary.

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been very gratifying to Mr Barnett, their leader.' William, 'the indefatigable organist of Ascension Church' also composed one of the pieces played in the concert. He was a true classical musician composing hundreds of pieces for the organ and piano.

SETTLE.

CONCERT.—On the Evening of November 2nd, the SETTLE CHORAL SOCIETY gave the first of the Winter Concerts. Miss Megson of the Hull Concerts, and Mr. Harper of the Choir of the Leeds Parish Church, were engaged on the occasion. Mr. Haddock, and Mr. Womack from Leeds, and Mr. Priestley from Bradford, also rendered most efficient assistance to the Instrumental part of the Society, and Mr. Benjamin Hardacre to the Vocal. The first part of the programme consisted of selections from Mendelssohn's Oratorio of St. Paul. These delicate and difficult Choruses were well rendered. Miss

SETTLE CHORAL SOCIETY.—On Thursday, the 13th ult., the Settle Choral Society gave their third and final subscription concert for the season 1865-6, in the Music Hall. A selection from the "Spring" and "Summer" of Haydn's "Seasons" formed the chief feature of the programme. For the occasion the Society had the good fortune to secure the services of Miss Berry Greening, of London, (Premiere Prix du Conservatoire de Paris, and late of the Imperial Chapel, at the Tuileries.) In the hands of such an artiste we need not say that the soprano music throughout was rendered with the greatest care and judgment; eliciting repeated marks of approbation from the audience—a more numerous one, by the way, than we have had the pleasure of seeing for some time at these concerts. Miss Greening was supported in the

concluded the first part. With a slight exception or two the Choruses were very accurately and effectively given, under the conductorship of Mr. Barnett, the indefatigable Organist of Ascension Church. His labours must have been very great to bring up the Society to the performance of these sublime works. The second part opened with the Overture Anacreo-

were played with great precision, and a crispness, unusual in amateur orchestras, which must have been very gratifying to Mr Barnett, their leader. Miss Berry Greening gave the following three songs:—Serenade, "Berceuse," Gounod; Cavatina, "Cherry Ripe," Horn; and a new song written especially for her by Gounod, "Where the wild flowers blow." We feel considerable diffidence in criticising so accomplished a singer. Her voice is of great richness and power, and possesses great flexibility and compass. Each song in turn had its numerous supporters among the audience, so much so, that after each she received a recall, to which, in the case of "Cherry Ripe," she kindly responded by repeating the last verse—a florid and difficult variation of the air, which, however, she seemed to render with as much ease as any of the previous verses, progressively difficult as they were of execution. The members of the Chorus gave with good effect two part songs—"Green Leaves," by Bianchi Taylor, and "The stag hunt," by W. H. Barnett; the latter of which (a spirited composition) was executed *con amore*, as the work of their able leader. A glee in this part of the programme not being forthcoming, Mr Frederick Carrodus, (brother of the well-known violinist of that name,) who with several amateurs from Keighley, kindly came over to assist in the orchestra, gave a short solo on the violin, which, though from want of notice unaccompanied, received a very hearty *encore* from all parts of the Hall. How much the Society is indebted to the excellent conductor, Mr G. Stansfeld, jun., only the members can fully realise. Much of the success of this concert is fairly due to the admirable way in which he wielded the baton. His genial love and thorough knowledge of music make success comparatively easy when he gives his good help.

ing of the Festival. Mr Andrews of the firm of Foster and Andrews, of Hull, having been engaged in putting a few last touches to the instrument almost till the Choirs entered the church. This state of affairs of course was much against the organist, Mr Barnett, who sat down to a new and almost untried instrument. But not withstanding this great disadvantage, he drew forth most varied and exquisite effects.

The other alterations which have been for some time going on in the church being yet unfinished the defects were more than covered by the judicious arrangement of choice flowers in pots which had been lent from some neighbouring Greenhouses for the occasion and with which the whole of the Chancel wall was screened.

In 1866 the church hosted the third festival of the North Craven Choir Union despite the fact that it was in the midst of significant building work. The rebuilding and enlargement of the church organ had only been completed on the morning of the concert but William was unphased and 'drew forth most varied and exquisite effects' whilst a floral display covered up the building works on the chancel wall [SC].

Margaret died, aged 53 in 1867, leaving William to bring up the children. He retired, aged 80, to number 3, Prospect Terrace on Station Road with his two daughters (and a servant). William outlived Margaret by almost 30 years, living to the age of 87. Infants Rebecca and William Percy are remembered on William's headstone but also have a separate grave and stone.

In loving memory of William Henry Barnett Died June 26 1895 aged 87. I know that my redeemer liveth. Margaret his wife died Jany 6 1867 aged 52. Rebecca Core Barnett died Nov 1845, aged 5 years. William Percy Barnett died Feb 27 1848 aged 2 years. Julia Barnett entered into rest August 10th 1922 aged 79. Faithful unto death. And of his granddaughter Clara F Barnett died at Stuttgart in Germany December 29th 1835. George Frederick Barnett died July 21 1872 Aged 39. George Joseph, son of the above died at Kurrachee Jan 1884 Aged 20, D14



D10 RG and WP Barnett (gravestone with a tiny cross pictured to right behind their parents' grave)

The Parish Magazine reported 'the church on earth has lost a faithful servant. For nearly 50 years he was Organist of our Parish Church. He was an organist and composer of hymn tunes of

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no little merit. One of the last acts of his life was to make a very handsome contribution to the fund which has been raised for the heating of our National Schools.' The Settle Almanac printed a generous obituary [LSA]. That's not bad for an orphaned son of a cotton dresser from the courts of central Leeds.

Son **George Frederick** was a musician who spent most of his adult life abroad and died, aged just 39 in 1872, in Warwickshire. George's children **George Joseph** and **Clara Farmer Barnett** spent some of their childhood living in Settle. George Joseph died in 1884, aged 20, in Kurrachee (Karachi), now in Pakistan.

William left an estate worth the equivalent of £280,000 to his two surviving spinster daughters **Julia** and **Fanny Ann**. They took the money to run a school in Honiton, Devon with their niece **Clara Farmer Barnett**. Clara, born in 1868, was an unusual young woman. She threw herself into a life of campaigning for a variety of causes. As a good singer (unsurprisingly) she performed at fundraising concerts to raise money for a variety of causes including the the organ fund at St Michael's church. In 1917 she was a member of the new Honiton YMCA committee to provide support during the war. In 1918 Clara became the secretary of the Honiton and District ladies' committee of the NSPCC. In 1923 Clara worked 'in connexion with' the League of Nations and campaigned for support for refugees [2].

In 1919 Clara gave a lecture about 'the World-Wide importance of *Joanna Southcott*' [2]. Joanna [ph3] was a self proclaimed religious prophetess. She wrote prophecies in rhyme and then announced herself as the *Woman of the Apocalypse* spoken of in a passage of the Revelation. Aged 64, Joanna declared herself pregnant with the new Messiah. She had a medical condition which gave her the appearance of being pregnant and this killed her a year later in 1814. Charles Dickens described Southcott in a description of the year 1775 at the beginning of his book *A Tale of Two Cities*.

The 'Southcottian Movement' continued as she left a sealed wooden box of prophecies, known as *Joanna Southcott's Box*, with the instruction that it be opened only at a time of national crisis, and then only in the presence of all the 24 bishops of the Church of England at that time, who were to spend a fixed period studying her prophecies. Supporters made unsuccessful attempts to open it during the Crimean War and again during the First World War [ph4]. Clara claimed 'that ever since Joanna passed out of this world the position of womanhood had been changing' and campaigned for the box to be opened. In 1927, six

Mr. Barnett was a most capable performer upon the organ, pianoforte violin, flute and 'cello, but his predilection lay in the direction of the organ, and it was indeed a treat to hear him extemporise upon that instrument when he happened to be in the vein to do so.

He led a singularly beautiful and quiet life, gaining the respect of all with whom he came in contact, and at the time of his decease it may safely be affirmed that he had not an enemy in the neighbourhood. Interred in the peaceful churchyard at Settle, a handsome rustic cross has been erected to his memory by his two daughters Miss Julia and Miss Fanny Barnett.

NEAR EAST REFUGEES.
To the Editor of the Daily Gazette,
Sir,—May I crave the hospitality of your columns to make an urgent appeal for monetary help to provide materials for clothing for the Near East refugees? The League of Nations (in connexion with which I am working) has made a most urgent request for clothing, especially for old men, women and children. Much has been done in

ing office. Every penny will be properly laid out, and a shilling will provide a garment for one of His little ones. All sums, large and small, will be gratefully received and acknowledged by me, if sent to Miss C. F. Barnett, Glenholme, Honiton, East Devon.
Yours truly,
C. F. BARNETT.
February 13th, 1923.

The World-Wide Importance of
Joanna Southcott.
FREE LECTURE by
MISS C. F. BARNETT,
HONITON.
at the SMALL BARNFIELD HALL,
To-Night (Tuesday), at 8 o'clock.
Chair to be taken by Mrs. G. E. FOA
(Falmouth).
Collection to Defray Expenses.



It was a very remarkable thing that ever since Joanna passed out of this world the position of womanhood had been changing until it had become what it was to-day. Joanna left to be opened by 24 Bishops, in a time of great crisis, a box of writings which had been corded and sealed ever since her death, and was held by a member of the Church of England, in trust, to be called for by the 24 Bishops. "Now then, dear friends," proceeded the lecturer (the audience numbered twenty-one ladies and one gentleman), "You and I have got to rouse the nation against the apathy of the Bishops and their refusal to open that box." The box, accord-



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years after Clara's lecture, a psychic researcher, Harry Price, claimed that he had come into possession of the box and arranged to have it opened. It was found to contain only a few oddments and unimportant papers, among them a lottery ticket and a horse-pistol. How very strange.

Julia Barnett died in 1922, aged 79, and sister Fanny Ann died three years later, aged 81 and Clara was the beneficiary of their wills. Clara died, unmarried, in Stuttgart, Germany in 1935, aged 67. William's gravestone commemorates daughter Julia, son George Frederick and his children George Joseph and Clara Farmer Barnett but none of them were buried in the grave. For some reason daughter Fanny Ann didn't get a mention.

William's only surviving sibling, James Barnett was a linen weaver who lived near Thirsk. He lived until the age of 98. Unfortunately his family were not as successful. James' son, another James, a farm labourer, was 'an old offender' with an impressive criminal record [3].

NORTHALLERTON.
NORTHALLERTON POLICE-COURT.—Yesterday, at the Court House, Northallerton, before Mr. R. Aikenhead, chairman, and Mr. T. G. Horsfall, an old offender named James Barnett pleaded guilty to being found in a hay chamber belonging to Mr. Matthew Duffield, at Borrowby, on the 8th inst. without any visible means of subsistence. Prisoner was only discharged from gaol a few days ago and given money to set him on the road. He had been four times previously convicted for felony. Sentenced to one month's imprisonment with hard labour.



This account has been compiled as part of the Settle Graveyard Project which has recorded gravestone inscriptions, updated church records and researched the lives of those buried. Life stories can be found on dalescommunityarchives.org.uk, 'settle graveyard project'. The 'Old Settle' family tree on ancestry.co.uk includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project is ongoing and welcomes queries and information on settlresearch@gmail.com. Latest news and events are on the Facebook page 'Settle Graveyard Project'.

*A – Joanne Harrison, *The Origin, Development and Decline of Back-to-Back Houses in Leeds, 1787-1937**

SC – Settle Chronicle, LSA – Lambert's Settle Almanac with the kind permission of the North Craven Buildings Preservation Trust

CH –with kind permission of the Craven Herald and Pioneer

Newspaper cuttings with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Lancaster Gazette, 2 – Devon and Exeter Gazette, 3 – Yorkshire Herald

ph1 – photo with the kind permission of Mike Howarth, ph2 – photo with the kind permission of the Settle Amateur Operatic Society, ph3 – photo credited to Wikipedia, public domain, ph4 – credited to georgiasam.blogspot.com

